

NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

Presented by Jason P. Miller, Chief of Communications and Community Relations

245 McKee Road | Dover, DE 19904 | Office: 302.857.5232 | jason.miller@delaware.gov

DOC provides COVID update

Dover, DE -- The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) today announced the deaths of two inmates from James. T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) from complications from serious chronic underlying health conditions and COVID. Both inmates, who were **part of a minimum security housing unit that has been closely monitored since April 8, with twice daily temperature checks**, died this morning, Wednesday, May 13 at Bayhealth Hospital, Kent Campus:

- **Richard Roth**, a 69 year-old inmate, died from complications from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), Diabetes, Hypertension, and COVID. At the first sign of a fever on April 29, Roth was isolated and a rapid COVID test was administered that returned a positive result. As symptoms developed he was admitted to Bayhealth Hospital, Kent Campus on May 1. Roth's condition had deteriorated over the past several days and he had been receiving treatment in the Hospital's Intensive Care Unit. Roth, of Newark, DE, has been in DOC custody since 1999 and was serving a life sentence plus 186 years for 1st Degree Murder, Robbery and Conspiracy.
- **Peter Schellinger**, a 64 year-old inmate, died from complications of Diabetes, Hypertension, Chronic Kidney Disease, Coronary Artery Disease and COVID. At the first sign of illness on May 4, Schellinger was admitted to the prison infirmary and administered a rapid COVID test which returned a positive result. On May 5, as symptoms developed, he was admitted to Bayhealth Hospital, Kent Campus. Schellinger had declined recommended treatment for a life-threatening underlying chronic condition and was receiving hospice care at the time of his death. Schellinger, of Philadelphia, PA, has been in DOC custody since 1998 and was serving two life sentences for 1st Degree Murder.

Roth's and Schellinger's bodies are being released to the Delaware Division of Forensic Science.

The DOC also today announced **the number of inmate COVID recoveries have reached 57 - an increase of 2 recoveries since Monday - and that rapid COVID testing has identified 3 additional positive test results, including COVID infections of 2 asymptomatic inmates.** Review an informational chart of positive COVID-19 cases among DOC employees, contracted staff and inmates for each DOC facility [by clicking HERE](#).

"Throughout our correctional system, 115 inmates have either recovered or are asymptomatic of illness, leaving only 16 inmates from only one facility who are currently experiencing any symptoms," **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said.** "Across the country, even after communities successfully bend the curve by reducing new cases and growing recoveries, they have seen that a small percentage of seriously ill COVID patients who are hospitalized with complications from underlying health conditions face growing odds over time that they will not recover, even with the most responsive medical care. We are saddened by today's deaths of two seriously ill inmates who had been hospitalized for several days. Medical staff are administering aggressive treatment to give our four hospitalized COVID inmate patients the best chance of recovery."

The latest inmate test results are as follows:

- **Three inmates from James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC).** All three inmates are from housing units that have been closely monitored for several weeks, including twice daily temperature checks. Two asymptomatic inmates were proactively isolated and administered a rapid COVID test, which returned a positive result, because they had contact with an individual who had tested positive for the virus. The third inmate was isolated at the first sign of illness and was administered a rapid COVID test which returned a positive result. Both asymptomatic inmates have been transferred to the JTVCC COVID-19 treatment center where they are exhibiting no symptoms of illness. The third inmate is being treated in the prison infirmary and is in stable condition.

Additionally, the DOC today announced the following staff test results:

- **Two Correctional Officers assigned to JTVCC.** The Officers were last on duty 17 days ago - on April 26, and 12 days ago - on May 1, respectively. After beginning to experience flu-like symptoms, the Officers began to self-isolate at home, and as symptoms developed sought medical attention, at which time a COVID-19 test was administered. The Officers are continuing to self-isolate at home.

No additional information will be provided about the identity of the inmates and officers for privacy protection.

The DOC is employing a variety of prevention, screening, cleaning and containment measures to guard against the spread of the novel coronavirus, including:

- All persons, including Officers, administrative staff and probationers who enter any Level V prison, Level IV violation of probation or work release center, or Probation and Parole Office are screened for COVID-19, including a series of questions and a forehead temperature check with a thermometer
- Staff who present with symptoms are sent home to self-quarantine and directed to contact their health care provider.
- Newly arriving inmates are held in isolation for the first 14 days, during which they are carefully monitored, including daily temperature checks with a thermometer.
- DOC has implemented extra daily cleaning of DOC facilities and is using specialized fogging machines to disinfect entire rooms of common areas, housing units and workspaces.

- Face masks are being worn by Correctional Officers and contract healthcare workers as a protection for inmates, Officers and other employees. All Correctional Officers have been wearing face masks since April 10.
- **Face masks have been provided to more than half of DOC's inmate population, including inmates who are in infirmaries, those with compromised immune systems, those with certain institutional jobs, such as food service, all inmates at the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center and the Sussex Community Corrections Center and nearly 250 inmates at Howard R. Young Correctional Institution.**
- Most Probationer visits with Probation Officers were transitioned to phone check-ins in March to support social distancing measures.

In addition, the DOC has temporarily suspended in-person prison programming to reduce the movement of people into facilities and movement of groups of people within facilities. Certain programs, including treatment and education programs and religious programming, have been transitioned to a virtual video format. Inmates continue to have outside recreation opportunities within their confined areas and continue to have access to phones to stay in regular contact with their loved ones. DOC is also expanding the use of electronic tablets among the inmate population, where available.

Get updated information about the DOC's response to COVID-19 and read previous announcements of positive COVID-19 cases by visiting <https://doc.delaware.gov>, and follow *decorrection* on Facebook and Twitter.

-END-